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Message Text

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PAGE 01 COLOMB 00413 011200Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /070 W
----------011205Z 005215 /14
P R 011115Z FEB 77
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6654
INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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E.O. 11652:N/A
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, CE
SUBJECT: DEVELOPMENTS IN AFTERMATH OF STRIKE

1. SUMMARY: WITH THE REMOVAL OF PRESS CENSORSHIP ON JANUARY 31, SRI LANKA CONTINUES THE RETURN TO NORMALITY AFTER LAST MONTH'S STRIKE. GOVERNMENT M.P.'S WHO SUPPORTED THE STRIKE ARE RESTIVE THOUGH AND THERE ARE RUMORS SOME MAY NOT SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT IN FEBRUARY 17 NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE. NEW TRADE UNION REGULATIONS TO CURB POWER OF UNIONS HAVE BEEN SUGGESTED.END SUMMARY.

2.GSL LIFTED PRESS CENSORSHIP, IMPOSED JANUARY 10, DURING THE ANTI-GOVERNMENT STRIKE, ON JANUARY 31. WITH THAT ACTION AND THE REMOVAL LAST WEEK OF THE BAN ON PUBLIC MEETINGS, ALL RESTRICTIONS IMPOSED DURING THE STRIKE HAVE ENDED.

3. THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE, SHAKEN UP BY THE STRIKE, HAS NOT YET SETTLED DOWN. THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SET FOR FEBRUARY 17; SPECULATION CONTINUES THAT FOUR SRI LANKA FREEDOM PARTY (SLFP) MP.'S MAY CROSS OVER AT THAT TIME
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(SOME REPORTS SAY THAT AS MANY AS 14 ARE RESTIVE). THE COMMUNIST PARTY (CP) COALITION PARTNER OF THE SLFP, IS DIVIDED AS TO WHAT TO DO TO SHOW ITS DISPLEASURE WITH SLFP ACTIONS TO END THE STRIKE. ITS MEMBERS TOO MAY CHOOSE THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE TO REVEAL THEIR DECISION. IF SOME OR ALL OF THE SIX CP MEMBERS SHOULD DECIDE TO ABSTAIN ON OR SUPPORT THE NO-CONFIDENCE

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MOTION, IT WOULD MAKE NO DIFFERENCE TO THE OUTCOME OF THE VOTE, (THE MOTION WILL ASSUREDLY FAIL), BUT IT WOULD INDICATE A BREAK WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE SLFP.

4. IN THE WAKE OF THE STRIKE, THE GSL IS REPORTEDLY CONSIDERING LEGISLATION DESIGNED TO CURB TRADE UNION LEADERS.ONE SUGGESTED REGULATION WOULD CALL FOR WORKERS TO VOTE ON A SECRET BALLOT ON WHETHER OR NOT TO STRIKE. ANOTHER PROPOSAL WOULD REQUIRE TRADE UNION LEADERS TO DECLARE THEIR ASSETS. SUCH PROPOSED LEGISLATION HAS THE PURPOSE OF RESTRICTING THE POWERS OF THE MOSTLY-LEFTIST URBAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT TO DISRUPT THE ECONOMY AND EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT, AS IT HAS DONE ON OCCASION IN THE PAST.

5. IN ANOTHER INDICATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT INCLINED TO BE LENIENT TOWARD LAST MONTH'S STRIKERS, IT HAS BEEN ANNOUNCED THAT FULL WAGES WILL BE DEDUCTED FOR THE TIME STRIKERS WERE ABSENT FROM WORK. IN SRI LANKA, WHERE MOST WORKERS LIVE PRECARIOUSLY FROM PAY-CHECK TO PAYCHECK, PERIODS WITHOUT PAY ARE A SUBSTANTIAL HARDSHIP. TO EASE THE BURDEN, THE PAY WILL BE DEDUCTED IN INSTALLMENTS OVER THE NEXT THREE MONTHS. AFTER SEVERAL ANTI-GOVERNMENT STRIKES IN THE PAST, WHEN THE OPPOSITION LATER CAME TO POWER, THE NEW GOVERNMENT RETROACTIVELY RESTORED PAY TO THE FORMER STRIKERS.

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6. THE CEYLON TRANSPORT BOARD, THE NATIONALIZED BUS SYSTEM, IS ALSO TREATING STRIKERS MORE HARSHLY THAN SOME HAD EXPECTED. ALTHOUGH ONLY A FEW OF THE ACTUAL RINGLEADERS HAVE ACTUALLY BEEN SACKED, MANY EMPLOYEES ARE AWAITING A DECISION BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THEIR FATE AND IN THE MEANTIME ARE NOT BEING GIVEN WORK. LARGE-SCALE FIRINGS WOULD PROBABLY MEAN MORE UNWANTED LABOR TROUBLE FOR THEGOVERNMENT.
REED

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Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Feb-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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